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PHYSICAL TEACHING.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE *British Medical Journal*.

(Reprinted from the *British Medical Journal*, Nov. 26, 1904.)

SIR,—In the *British Medical Journal* of November 19th, p. 1428, there appears a notice of a meeting to consider the advisability of founding a central institute for physical education in London,* and at page 1422 some editorial remarks of a somewhat caustic nature upon this meeting.† The notice is rather too brief to convey to the readers of the *Journal* a complete idea of what the object of the meeting was, and I therefore should like to explain it as briefly as possible. The motion was to found a central institute in London on the same lines as that in Stockholm, but with very considerable limitations. As I pointed out in seconding the proposal, the Central Institute in Stockholm has two distinct functions: (1) that of teaching physical education; and (2) that of granting certificates of fitness. These two functions are combined in the Stockholm Institute, just as they are in the case of medicine in the University of Edinburgh, but they may be perfectly distinct, as they are in the case of the University of London and its affiliated schools. In the event of the establishment of a school for physical training in London it would be better that it should remain separate from an institute which would grant certificates, and that London and provincial schools should equally be affiliated to such an institute, which should hold examinations and grant certificates to scholars from any school recognized by it on the same plan as that followed by the University of London. As there are a number of excellent schools for physical education already in the neighbourhood of London and in large provincial towns, it would obviously be unfair to them that any new school

* A conference held on November 23rd, 1904, at the offices of the London Education Committee, Victoria Embankment. The Bishop of Bristol presided, and the subject was introduced by Miss Theodora Johnson, Principal of the Swedish Institute, Clifton, Bristol.

† "The Tragi-Comedy of Physical Degeneration."

founded in London should arrogate to itself any pre-eminence over them in the matter of giving certificates.

But it may be asked, if there are already so many schools for physical education why should another be started? The answer simply is that a great movement in the direction of physical education in schools is going on in the country, and there does not seem to be at present adequate provision for the training of school teachers in this subject.

The Board of Education is doing a great deal in this direction, and the presence of Lord Londonderry (President of this Board) at the meeting, shows the interest he takes in the subject, although he was careful to disclaim any official responsibility in the matter. The Central Institute in Stockholm does not only grant certificates; it also teaches physical training, and of this, as mentioned in the *British Medical Journal*, p. 1428, there are four sections: (1) Educational; (2) medical; (3) military; and (4) æsthetic. The two latter sections are not intended to be taught in the proposed school in London, and as there is likely to be a difference of opinion regarding the teaching of medical massage and movements, this section was also omitted in the resolution.* The essence of the proposal, therefore, is that it is advisable:

- (1) To establish a school for teaching educational physical exercises in London, so as to supplement the schools at present at work, and give a supply equal to the increased and increasing demand.
- (2) To establish a central institute which shall co-ordinate all the schools for this subject throughout the country, by holding proper examinations, and if required making inspections so as to maintain a properly high standard of efficiency in all.

* Sir William Church, Bart., K.C.B., President of the Royal College of Physicians, "concluded by moving a resolution expressing the opinion that steps should be taken to establish a national system of physical education, and pledging those who had been invited to the meeting to form themselves into an association for pressing the proposal on the Government, the public, and public bodies." Sir Lauder Brunton seconded the resolution.—*British Medical Journal*, November 19th, 1904, p. 1428.

I think that these objects are likely to recommend themselves to all who have the welfare of the country at heart.

In regard to the teaching of medical massage and movements and issuing certificates and licences to masseurs and masseuses, opinion is likely to be more divided. For my own part, I regard massage as a useful therapeutic instrument, which, like opium, is capable of doing great good, and is also capable of great abuse. And just as the law prevents opium from being sold by ignorant persons, and punishes those who sell it carelessly, and thereby facilitate its criminal use, so massage should be regulated in like manner, and the public safeguarded against mischief either from its ignorant use or wilful abuse. Frequently English masseurs and masseuses come to me with the complaint that the Swedes come to this country and take the bread from their mouths. But the reason is simple. The Swedes know their work because they have spent either two or three years in learning it, whilst many of the English applicants who come to me asking for eases, tell me they are thoroughly trained in massage, medical electricity and the Nauheim treatment because they have attended a full course lasting three months. This seems to me to show the desirability of some school where English masseurs and masseuses might obtain as thorough a training in London as the Swedes do in Stockholm. But this question is still an open one, and so are all the details of the proposed School and Institute for Physical Education. The scheme is still in embryo, but it is to be hoped that the medical profession generally will take it into consideration, and that each medical man will help as far as he can to promote physical education throughout the country by carefully considering the lines on which it should be carried out, giving advice when he can, supporting the proposals which are right, opposing those which are wrong, and perhaps also assisting by investing money in schools which, if properly conducted, should require no charity, but should, on the contrary, bring in a fair dividend to their supporters.—

LONDON, W.,

Nov. 21, 1904.

I am, etc.,

LAUDER BRUNTON.

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ST. MARTIN'S LANE, LONDON, W.C.





